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A

MORAL AND POLITICAL

LECTURE,

DELIVERED AT

BRISTOL.

BY

S. T. COLERIDGE,

OF

Jesus College, Cambridge.

——— To calm and guide
The ſwelling democratic tide;
To watch the ſtate's *uncertain* frame;
To baffle Faction's *partial* aim;
But chiefly with determin'd zeal
To quell the ſervile Band that kneel
To Freedom's jealous foes;
And laſh that Monſter, who is daily found
Expert and bold our country's peace to wound,
Yet dreads to handle arms, nor manly counſel knows.

AKENSIDE.

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THEY, who in these days of jealousy and Party rage dare publicly explain the Principles of Freedom, must expect to have their Intentions misrepresented, and to be entitled like the Apostles of Jesus, "stirrers up "of the People, and men accused of Sedition." The following Lecture is therefore printed as it was delivered, the Author choosing that it should be published with all the inaccuracies and inelegant colloquialisms of an hasty Composition, rather than that he should be the Object of possible Calumny as one who had rashly uttered sentiments which he afterwards timidly qualified.

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A

MORAL & POLITICAL

LECTURE.

WHEN the Wind is fair and the Planks of the Veſſel ſound, we may ſafely truſt every thing to the management of profeſſional Mariners; but in a Tempeſt and on board a crazy Bark, all muſt contribute their Quota of Exertion. The Stripling is not exempted from it by his Youth, nor the Paſſenger by his Inexperience. Even ſo in the preſent agitations of the public mind, every one ought to conſider his intellectual faculties as in a ſtate of immediate requiſition. All may benefit Society in ſome degree. The exigences of the Times do not permit us to ſtay for the matureſt years, leſt the opportunity be loſt, while we are waiting for an increaſe of power. Omitting therefore the diſguſting Egotiſms of an affected Humility, we ſhall briefly explain the deſign, and poſſible benefit, of the propoſed political diſquiſitions.

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Companies reſembling the preſent will from a variety of circumſtances conſiſt *chiefly* of the zealous Advocates for Freedom. It will be therefore our endeavour, not ſo much to excite the torpid, as to regulate the feelings of the ardent: and above all, to evince the neceſſity of *bottoming* on fixed Principles, that ſo we may not be the unſtable Patriots of Paſſion or Accident, or hurried away by names of which we have not ſifted the meaning, and by tenets of which we have not examined the conſequences. The Times are trying: and in order to be prepared againſt their difficulties, we ſhould have acquired a prompt facility of adverting in all our doubts to ſome grand and comprehenſive Truth. In a deep and ſtrong Soil muſt that Bleſſing fix its Roots, the height of which, like that of the Tree in Daniel, is to "reach to Heaven, and the Sight of it to the ends of all the Earth."

The Example of France is indeed a "Warning to Britain." A nation wading to their Rights through Blood, and marking the track of Freedom by Devaſtation! Yet let us not embattle our Feelings againſt our Reaſon. Let us not indulge our malignant Paſſions under the maſk of Humanity. Inſtead of railing with infuriate declamation againſt theſe exceſſes, we ſhall be more profitably employed in developing the ſources of them. French Freedom is the Beacon, that while it guides us to Equality ſhould ſhew us the Dangers, that throng the road.

The annals of the French Revolution have recorded in Letters of Blood, that the Knowledge of the Few cannot

cannot counteract the Ignorance of the Many; that the Light of Philoſophy, when it is confined to a ſmall Minority, points out the Poſſeſſors as the Victims, rather than the Illuminators, of the Multitude. The Patriots of France either haſtened into the dangerous and gigantic Error of making certain Evil the means of contingent Good, or were ſacrificed by the Mob, with whoſe prejudices and ferocity their unbending Virtue forbade them to aſſimilate. Like Sampſon, the People were ſtrong—like Sampſon, the People were blind. Thoſe two maſſy Pillars of Oppreſſion's Temple, Monarchy and Ariſtocracy

" With horrible convulſion to and fro"
" They tugg'd, they ſhook—till down they came
" and drew"
" The whole Roof after them with burſt of Thun-
" der"
" Upon the heads of all who ſat beneath,"
" Lords, Ladies, Captains, Counſellors, and
" Prieſts,"
" Their choice Nobility!"

MILTON. SAM. AGON.

There was not a Tyrant in Europe, that did not tremble on his Throne. Freedom herſelf heard the Craſh aghaſt—yet ſhall ſhe not have heard it unbenefited, if haply the Horrors of that Day ſhall have made other nations timely wiſe—if a great people ſhall from hence become adequately illuminated for a Revolution bloodleſs, like Poland's, but not, like Poland's aſſaſſinated by the foul Treaſon of Tyrants againſt Liberty.

Revolutions

Revolutions are ſudden to the unthinking only. Political Diſturbances happen not without their warning Harbingers. Strange Rumblings and confuſed Noiſes ſtill precede theſe earthquakes and hurricanes of the moral World. In the eventful years previous to a Revolution, the Philoſopher as he paſſes up and down the walks of Life, examines with an anxious eye the motives and manners, that characteriſe thoſe who ſeem deſtined to be the Actors in it. To delineate with a free hand the different Claſſes of our preſent Oppoſitioniſts to "Things as they are,"—may be a delicate, but it is a neceſſary Taſk—in order that we may enlighten, or at leaſt beware of, the miſguided men who have enliſted themſelves under the banners of Freedom from no Principles or from bad ones—whether they be thoſe, "Who extol things vulgar"—and

"admire they know not what,
"And know not whom, but as one leads the other"—

or whether thoſe,

"Whoſe end is private Hate, not help to Freedom,
"In *her* way to *Virtue* adverſe and turbulent."

The firſt Claſs among the profeſſed Friends of Liberty is compoſed of Men, who unaccuſtomed to the labor of thorough Inveſtigation and not particularly oppreſſed by the Burthen of State, are yet impelled by their feelings to diſapprove of its groſſer depravities, and prepared to give an indolent Vote in favor of Reform. Their ſenſibilities unbraced by the co-operation of fixed principles, they offer no ſacrifices to the divinity of active Virtue. Their political Opinions depend with weather-

cock

cock uncertainty on the winds of Rumor, that blow from France. On the report of French Victories they blaze into Republicaniſm, at a tale of French Exceſſes they darken into Ariſtocrats; and ſeek for ſhelter among thoſe deſpicable adherents to Fraud and Tyranny, who ironically ſtyle themſelves Conſtitutionaliſts. Theſe *dough-baked Patriots* may not however be without their uſe. This Oſcillation of political Opinion, while it retards the Day of Revolution, may operate as a preventative to its Exceſſes. Indeciſion of Character, though the effect of Timidity, is almoſt always aſſociated with benevolence.

Wilder Features characterize the ſecond Claſs. Sufficiently poſſeſſed of natural Senſe to deſpiſe the Prieſt, and of natural Feeling to hate the Oppreſſor, they liſten only to the inflammatory harangues of ſome mad-headed Enthuſiaſt, and imbibe from them Poiſon, not Food, Rage not Liberty. Unillumined by Philoſophy and ſtimulated to a luſt of Revenge by aggravated wrongs, they would make the Altar of Freedom ſtream with blood, while the graſs grew in the deſolated Halls of Juſtice. Theſe men are the rude Materials from which a deteſtable Miniſter manufactures Conſpiracies. Among theſe men he ſends a brood of ſly political Monſters, in the character of ſanguinary Demagogues, and like Satan of Old, "The Tempter ere the Accuſer" enſnares a few into Treaſon, that he may alarm the whole into Slavery. He, who has dark purpoſes to ſerve, muſt uſe dark means—Light would diſcover, reaſon would expoſe him: He muſt endeavour to ſhut out both—

or if this prove impracticable, make them appear frightful by giving them frightful Names : For farther than Names the Vulgar enquire not. Religion and Reason are but poor Substitutes for " Church and Constitution ;" and the sable-vested Instigators of the Birmingham Riots well knew, that a Syllogism could not disarm a drunken Incendiary of his Firebrand, or a demonstration *helmet* a Philosopher's Head against a Brickbat. But in the principles, which this Apostate has, by his emissaries, sown among a few blind zealots for Freedom, he has digged a pit into which he himself may perhaps be doomed to fall. We contemplate those principles with horror. Yet they possess a kind of wild Justice well calculated to spread them among the grosly ignorant. To uninlightened minds, there are terrible charms in the idea of Retribution, however savagely it be inculcated. The Groans of the Oppressors make fearful yet pleasant music to the ear of him, whose mind is darkness, and into whose soul the iron has entered.

This class, at present, is comparatively small--Yet soon to form an overwhelming majority, unless great and immediate efforts are used to lessen the intolerable grievances of our poorer brethren, and infuse into their sorely wounded hearts the healing qualities of knowledge. For can we wonder that men should want humanity, who want all the circumstances of life that humanize ? Can we wonder that with the ignorance of Brutes they should unite their ferocity ? peace and comfort be with these ! But let us shudder to hear from men of dissimilar opportunities sentiments of similar revengefulness

vengefulneſs. The purifying alchemy of Education may tranſmute the ere eneſs of an ignorant man into virtuous energy—but what remedy ſhall we apply to him, whom Plenty has not ſoftened, whom Knowledge has not taught Benevolence ? This is one among the many fatal effects which reſult from the want of fixed principles. Convinced that vice is error, we ſhall entertain ſentiments of Pity for the vicious, not of Indignation—and even with reſpect to that bad man, to whom we have before alluded, altho' we are now groaning beneath the burthen of his miſconduct, we ſhall harbour no ſentiments of revenge; but rather *condole* with him that his chaotic Iniquities have exhibited ſuch a complication of Extravagance, Inconſiſtency, and raſhneſs, as may *alarm* him with apprehenſions of approaching lunacy !

There are a third claſs among the friends of Freedom who poſſeſs not the wavering character of the firſt deſcription, nor the ferocity laſt delineated. They purſue the intereſts of Freedom ſteadily, but with narrow and ſelf-centering views : they anticipate with exultation the abolition of priviledged orders, and of acts that perſecute by excluſion from the right of citizenſhip : they are prepared to join in digging up the rubbiſh of mouldering eſtabliſhments and ſtripping off the taudry pageantry of Governments. Whatever is above them they are moſt willing to drag down ; but alas ! they uſe not the pulley ! Whatever tends to improve and elevate the ranks of our poorer brethren, they regard with ſuſpicious jealouſy, as the dreams of the viſionary ; as if there were any thing in the ſuperiority of Lord to Gentle-

man, ſo mortifying in the barrier, ſo fatal to happineſs in the conſequences, as the more real diſtinction of maſter and ſervant, of rich man and of poor. Wherein am I made worſe by my ennobled neighbour? do the childiſh titles of ariſtocracy detract from my domeſtic comforts, or prevent my intellectual acquiſitions? but thoſe inſtitutions of ſociety which ſhould condemn me to the neceſſity of twelve hours daily toil, would make my *ſoul* a ſlave, and ſink *the rational* being in the mere animal. It is a mockery of our fellow creatures' wrongs to call them equal in rights, when by the bitter compulſion of their wants we make them inferior to us in all that can ſoften the heart, or dignify the underſtanding. Let us not ſay that this is the work of time—that it is impracticable at pre ſent, unleſs we, each in our individual capacities do ſtrenuouſly and perſeveringly endeavour to diffuſe among our domeſtics thoſe comforts and that illumination which far beyond all political ordinances are the true equalizers of men. But of the propriety and utility of holding up the diſtant mark of attainable perfection, we ſhall enter more fully towards the cloſe of this addreſs; we turn with pleaſure to the contemplation of that ſmall but glorious band, whom we may truly diſtinguiſh by the name of thinking and diſintereſted Patriots. theſe are the men who have encouraged the ſympathetic paſſions till they have become irreſiſtable habits, and made their duty a neceſſary part of their ſelf intereſt, by the long continued cultivation of that moral taſte which derives our moſt exquiſite pleaſures from the contemplation of poſſible perfection, and

proportionate

proportionate pain from the perception of exiſting *depravation.* Accuſtomed to regard all the affairs of man as a proceſs, they never hurry and they never pauſe; theirs is not that twilight of political knowledge which gives us juſt light enough to place one foot before the other; as they advance, the ſcene ſtill opens upon them, and they preſs right onward with a vaſt and various landſcape of exiſtence around them. Calmneſs and energy mark all their actions, benevolence is the ſilken thread that runs through the pearl chain of all their virtues. Believing that vice originates not in the man, but in the ſurrounding circumſtances; not in the heart, but in the underſtanding; he is hopeleſs concerning no one—to correct a vice or generate a virtuous conduct he pollutes not his hands with the ſcourge of coercion; but by endeavouring to alter the circumſtances removes, or by ſtrengthening the intellect diſarms, the temptation. The unhappy children of vice and folly, whoſe tempers are adverſe to their own happineſs as well as to the happineſs of others, will at times awaken a natural pang; but he looks forward with gladdened heart to that glorious period when Juſtice ſhall have eſtabliſhed the univerſal fraternity of Love. Theſe ſoul ennobling views beſtow the virtues which they anticipate. He whoſe mind is habitually impreſt with them ſoars above the preſent ſtate of humanity, and may be juſtly ſaid to dwell in the preſence of the moſt high. Regarding every event even as he that ordains it, evil vaniſhes from before him, and he views with naked eye the eternal form of univerſal beauty.

Say

Say why was Man ſo eminently raiſed
Amid the vaſt creation—why ordain'd
Thro' life and death to dart his piercing eye,
With thoughts beyond the limits of his frame,
But that the Omnipotent might ſend him forth
In ſight of mortal and immortal powers,
As on a boundleſs theatre, to run
The great career of Juſtice—to exalt
His generous aim to all diviner deeds,
To chaſe each partial purpoſe from his breaſt
And thro' the toſſing tide of chance and pain
To hold his courſe unfaltering? elſe why burns
In mortal boſoms this unquenched hope
That breathes from day to day ſublimer things
And mocks poſſeſſion?
——————————would the forms
Of ſervile cuſtom cramp the patriots power,
Would ſordid policies, the barbarous growth
Of ignorance and rapine bow him down
To tame purſuits, to Indolence and Fear?
Lo he appeals to Nature, to the winds
And rolling waves, the ſuns unwearied courſe,
The elements and ſeaſons—all declare
For what the Eternal Maker has ordain'd
The powers of Man: we feel within ourſelves
His energy divine: he tells the heart
He meant, he made us to behold and love
What he beholds and loves, the general orb
Of Life and Being—to be great like him,
Beneficent and active.

AKENSIDE.

On

On such a plan has a Gerald formed his intellect Withering [illegible] and tainted gales of a prison, his healthful [illegible] looks down from the citadel of his integrity on his impotent persecutors. I saw him in the foul and naked room of a jail—his cheek was sallow with confinement—his body was emaciated, yet his eye spoke the invincible purposes of his soul, and his voice still sounded with rapture the successes of freemen, forgetful of his own lingering martyrdom! Such too were the illustrous Triumvirate* whom as a Greek Poet expresses it, its not lawful for bad men even to praise. I will not say that I have abused your patience in thus indulging my feelings in these strains of unheard gratitude to men, who may seem to justify God in the creation of man. It is with pleasure that I am permitted to recite a yet unpublished tribute to their merit, the production of a man who has sacrificed all the energies of his heart and head—a splendid offering on the altar of Liberty.

To the Exiled Patriots.

Martyrs of Freedom—ye who firmly good
Stept forth the champions in her glorious cause,
Ye who against Corruption nobly stood
For Justice, Liberty, and equal Laws.

Ye who have urged the cause of man so well
Whilst proud Oppression's torrent swept along,
Ye who so firmly stood, so nobly fell,
Accept one ardent Briton's grateful song.

For

* Muir, Palmer, and Margarot.

For ſhall Oppreſſion vainly think by Fear
To quench the fearleſs energy of mind?
And glorying in your fall, exult it here
As tho' no honeſt heart were left behind?

Thinks the proud tyrant by the pliant law
The timid jury and the judge unjuſt,
To ſtrike the ſoul of Liberty with awe,
And ſcare the friends of Freedom from their truſt?

As eaſy might the Deſpots' empty pride
The onward courſe of ruſhing ocean ſtay;
As eaſy might his jealous caution hide
From mortal eyes the orb of general day.

For like that general orb's eternal flame
Glows the mild force of Virtue's conſtant light;
Tho' clouded by Misfortune, ſtill the ſame,
For ever conſtant and for ever bright.

Not till eternal chaos ſhall that light
Before Oppreſſion's fury fade away;
Not till the ſun himſelf be loſt in night;
Not till the frame of Nature ſhall decay.

Go then ſecure, in ſteady virtue go,
Nor heed the peril of the ſtormy ſeas—
Nor heed the felon's name, the outcaſt's woe;
Contempt and pain, and ſorrow and diſeaſe.

Tho' cankering cares corrode the ſinking frame,
Tho' ſickneſs rankle in the ſallow breaſt;
Tho' Death were quenching faſt the vital flame,
Think but for what ye ſuffer, and be bleſt.

So

So ſhall your great examples fire each ſoul,
So in each free-born breaſt for ever dwell,
Till Man ſhall riſe above the unjuſt controul—
Stand where ye ſtood, and triumph where ye fell.

To accompliſh the great object in which we are anxiouſly engaged to place Liberty on her ſeat with bloodleſs hands, we have ſhewn the neceſſity of forming ſome fixed and determinate principles of action to which the familiarized mind may at all times advert. We now proceed to that moſt important point, namely, to ſhew what thoſe principles muſt be. In times of tumult firmneſs and conſiſtency are peculiary needful, becauſe the paſsions and prejudice of mankind are then more powerfully excited: we have ſhewn in the example of France that to its want of general information, its miſeries and its horrors may be attributed. We have reaſon to believe that a revolution in other parts of Europe is not far diſtant. Oppreſsion is grievous—the oppreſſed feel and complain. Let us profit by the example of others; devaſtation has marked the courſe of moſt revolutions, and the timid aſſertors of Freedom equally with its clamorous enemies, have ſo cloſely aſſociated the ideas, that they are unable to contemplate the one, diſunited from the other. The evil is great, but it may be averted—it has been a general, but it is not therefore a neceſsary conſequence. In order to avert it, we ſhould teach ourſelves and others habitually to conſider, that truth wields no weapon, but that

that of inveſtigation, we ſhould be cautious how we indulge even the feelings of virtuous indignation. Indignatio is the handſome brother of Anger and Hatred—Benevolence alone beſeems the Philoſopher. Let us not graſp even Deſpotiſm with too abrupt a hand, leſt like the envenomed inſect of Peru,* it infect with its poiſon, the hand that removes it harſhly. Let us be ware that we continue not the evils of tyranny, when the monſter ſhall be driven from the earth. Its temple is founded on the ruins of mankind. Like the fane of Teſcalipoca the Mexican Deity; it is erected with human ſkulls and cemented with human blood,—let us beware that we be not transported into revenge while we are levelling the loathſome pile with the ground, leſt when we erect the temple of Freedom we but vary the ſtile of architecture, not change the materials. Our object is to deſtroy pernicious ſyſtems not their miſguided adherents. Philoſophy imputes not the great evil to the corrupted but to the ſyſtem which preſents the temptation to corruption. The evil muſt ceaſe when the cauſe is removed, and the courtier who is enabled by State Machinations to embroil or enſlave a nation when levelled to the ſtandard of men will be impotent of evil, as he is now unconſcious of good. Humane from principle, not fear, the diſciple of liberty ſhrinks not from his duty. He will not court perſecution by the ill-timed obtruſion of Truth, ſtill leſs will he ſeek to avoid it by concealment or dereliction.

J. H. Tooke

* The Coya, an inſect of ſo thin a ſkin, that on being incautiouſly touched, it burſts, and of ſo ſubtle a poiſon that it is immediately abſorbed into the body, and proves fatal.

J. H. Tooke on the morning of his trial wrote to a fellow ſufferer in theſe words "Nothing will ſo much ſerve the cauſe of freedom as our *acquittal*, except our *execution*." He meant I preſume to imply that whatever contributes to increaſe diſcuſſion muſt accelerate the progreſs of liberty. Let activity and perſeverance and moderation ſupply the want of numbers. Convinced of the juſtice of our principles, let neither ſcorn nor oppreſſion prevent us from diſſeminating them. By the gradual depoſition of time, error has been piled upon error and prejudice on prejudice, till few men are tall enough to look over them, and those whoſe intellects ſurpaſs the common ſtature, and who deſcribe the green vales and pleaſant proſpects beyond them, will be thought to have created images in vacancy and be honoured with the name of madman; but

It is the motive ſtrong the conſcience pure
That bids us firmly act or meek endure:
'Tis this will ſhield us when the ſtorm beats hard
Content tho' poor had we no other guard!

BOWLES.

FINIS.